

Richard Fulton: 3 ways the former mayor changed the face of Nashville

Nate Rau and Karen Grigsby, The Nashville TennesseanPublished 10:06 a.m. CT Nov. 29, 2018 | Updated 10:16 a.m. CT Nov. 29, 2018

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Richard Fulton over the years

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Longtime [Nashville Mayor Richard Fulton died Wednesday night](#) at the age of 91.

A Democrat, Fulton served in the state Senate and U.S. House of Representatives before spending 12 years as Nashville mayor, from 1975 to 1987.

A Tennessean editorial published on Oct. 6, 1987 — the day after Fulton turned over the reins to his successor, Bill Boner — called Fulton a "great mayor" and said the secret to his success was making decisions based on what was "best for all people — not a select few."

Here are three ways Fulton changed the face of Nashville.

1. Fulton was a leading visionary of downtown development

Fulton was the driving force behind developing Second Avenue South, Riverfront Park, the construction of Interstate 440, the creation of the Metro Development and Housing Agency and adding 485 acres of parks.

The 1987 editorial says:

"Consider Nashville in 1975. There was no Riverfront Park. There was no Nashville Convention Center. The asphalt on Church Street was crumbling and the sidewalks were cracked. Second Avenue was a ghost town. ...

"Consider Nashville today. ... The economy is healthy, and is likely to stay that way because of its diversity.

"Citizens and visitors alike love Nashville. And they should — even by modest accounts, this is a delightful city. Mr. Fulton doesn't deserve all the credit — but no individual deserves any more."

2. Fulton won the most famous election in Nashville history

In the 1962 Democratic primary for the 5th Congressional District seat, Fulton was initially declared the loser and incumbent Rep. Carlton Loser was the apparent winner. But reporting by The Tennessean uncovered election irregularities.

More: [Nashville remembers late Mayor Richard Fulton, 'a man of integrity and humility'](#)

An array of lawsuits filed by upstart attorney George Barrett, a childhood friend of Fulton's at the onset of a prominent legal career, led the election commission to throw out the results. Fulton subsequently won the followup election and represented the Nashville area in Congress for seven terms.

3. Fulton was an ardent supporter of the civil rights movement

Richard Fulton, former Nashville mayor and congressman, dies at 91 Nashville Tennessean

Fulton was a social progressive before it was the default political setting in Nashville.

While he was congressman, his vote was among the four "Southern" ballots cast in the House in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. "Many of us were ashamed of the racial strife that existed in our home cities and across the nation," Fulton, a Nashville native, told The Tennessean in 1987.

More: [Richard Fulton, former Nashville mayor and congressman, dies at 91](#)